

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01220 071612Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SS-15
SSO-00 SP-02 PM-05 NSCE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 SSM-03
NEAE-00 PA-01 USIE-00 /072 W
-----005846 071620Z /50

O 071545Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7005
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1220

JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP, PBOR, MOPS, LE, SY, IS, PLO
SUBJ: SAIQA IN SOUTH LEBANON

REF: A) DIA 040607Z MAR 78, B) IR 6 849 0183 78 - TEL AVIV,
C) IR 6 849 0193 78 - TEL AVIV, D) JERUSALEM 1030, E) IR 6 857
0063 78 BEIRUT

1. FOLLOWING IS COORDINATED COUNTRY TEAM RESPONSE TO REQUEST
IN REF A FOR ASSESSMENT OF SAIQA DEPLOYMENT TO SOUTH LEBANON.

2. SAIQA PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IS NOT NEW. THERE HAVE
BEEN SMALL SAIQA ELEMENTS IN THIS GENERAL AREA SINCE THE AFTERMATH
OF JANUARY 1977 INCURSION BY SYRIAN ADF FORCES TO VICINITY OF
NABATIYAH. IT WAS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME
1500 - 2000 SAIQA TROOPS SOUTH OF LITANI SINCE LAST SPRING.
SEE FOR INSTANCE, OUR IR 6857001878. WHAT IS NEW, ACCORDING
TO OUR INFORMATION AS SUPPORTED BY REFERENCES, IS THAT IN LATE
FEBRUARY SAIQA SENT ONE COMPANY (ABOUT 100 MEN) EACH TO
TYRE, BINT JBAYL, AND NAQURA. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01220 071612Z

REPRESENTS NET INCREASE IN SAIQA STRENGTH IN SOUTH, OR WHETHER
IT IS SIMPLY MOVEMENT OF FORCES ALREADY ON THE GROUND.

3. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS TO WHY SYRIANS DECIDED TO MAKE THIS
MOVE AT THIS TIME. ASSAD HAS LONG-TERM INTEREST IN INCREASING
SYRIAN INFLUENCE AMONG PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON. WHEN SYRIAN
TROOPS FIRST ENTERED LEBANON IN JUNE 1976,

TO COMBAT GROWING PALESTINIAN INFLUENCE, FATAH RETALIATED AGAINST SYRIA BY CLOSING SAIQA OFFICES IN TYRE AND EXPELLING SAIQA UNITS FROM MOST OF SOUTH LEBANON. AFTER SADAT INITIATIVE LAST YEAR, SYRIAN-PLO COOPERATION IN LEBANON INCREASED AND IS NOW AT A HIGH POINT. SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE LEBANESE ABILITY TO OBJECT TO SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN MOVES (SINCE THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS) IS AT A LOW POINT. THUS ASSAD HAD A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY. SAIQA'S REAPPEARANCE AND INCREASED STRENGTH IN SOUTH LEBANON HAS PRESUMABLY BEEN WORKED OUT BETWEEN ARAFAT AND ASSAD IN THEIR MUTUAL INTEREST. REMARK OF BAATHIST ASSEM QANSUH TO AMBASSADOR ON MARCH 1 WOULD SUPPORT THIS INTERPRETATION. HE SAID SAIQA WAS SIMPLY RETURNING TO EARLIER POSITIONS.

4. WE BELIEVE REJECTIONISTS ARE NOW ACCEPTING PRESENCE OF SAIQA IN TYRE AND ELSEWHERE FOR SAME REASON AS MAIN-LINE PLO; THAT IS, PALESTINIANS, HAVING LOST EGYPTIAN SUPPORT, ARE ACCEPTING HELP WHEREVER THEY CAN GET IT. REJECTIONISTS AS WELL AS OTHER PALESTINIANS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN STIMULATED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITIONS BY RECENT CHRISTIAN/ISRAELI MOVES INCLUDING: (1) CHRISTIAN BOMBARDMENT OF PALESTINIAN POSITIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON DURING FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, (2) ISRAELI ROAD-BUILDING ACTIVITY. (IR 6857 0038 78 BEIRUT), (3) PRESENCE OF ISRAELI OUTPOSTS ON LEBANESE SOIL (USUN 793), AND (4) RECENT ATTEMPTS TO EXTEND CHRISTIAN/ISRAELI CONTROL OF BORDER FROM MARKABA TO AY TARUN. CHRISTIAN ATTACK ON MARUN AR RAS WAS PROBABLY LAST STRAW AS FAR AS PALESTINIANS WERE CONCERNED AND THEY THEREFORE COUNTER-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01220 071612Z

ATTACKED AND RETOOK THIS POSITION. WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE CONFIRMATION, HOWEVER, THAT SAIQA ELEMENTS WERE INVOLVED IN THIS COUNTERATTACK.

5. WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE THAT THE LIMITED NUMBER OF SAIQA TROOPS NOW IN SOUTHERN LEBANON BORDER AREA POSE ANY STRATEGIC THREAT TO ISRAEL. SYRIANS CERTAINLY KNOW THAT ISRAELIS REGARD SAIQA AS AN ARM OF SYRIAN MILITARY BUT THEY MAY FEEL THAT SINCE ISRAEL DID NOT OBJECT TO PRESENCE OF SCATTERED SAIQA ELEMENTS DURING PAST YEAR, THEY WOULD NOT OBJECT TO THIS VERY LIMITED INCREASE, IF IN FACT THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE AT ALL. WHILE WE WOULD OF COURSE DEFER TO VIEWS OF EMBASSY DAMASCUS, WE SUSPECT SYRIA HAS SENT ADDITIONAL SAIQA FORCES TO SOUTH LEBANON IN ORDER TO INCREASE ITS POLITICAL AND MILITARY INFLUENCE OVER PALESTINIAN FORCES AND NOT REPEAT NOT IN ORDER TO PROVOKE ISRAEL.

PARKER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT01220
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780102-1135
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT JOINT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803100/aaaadgkd.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f80281b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3100466
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAIQA IN SOUTH LEBANON
TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, MOPS, LE, SY, IS, PLO, SAIQA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f80281b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014